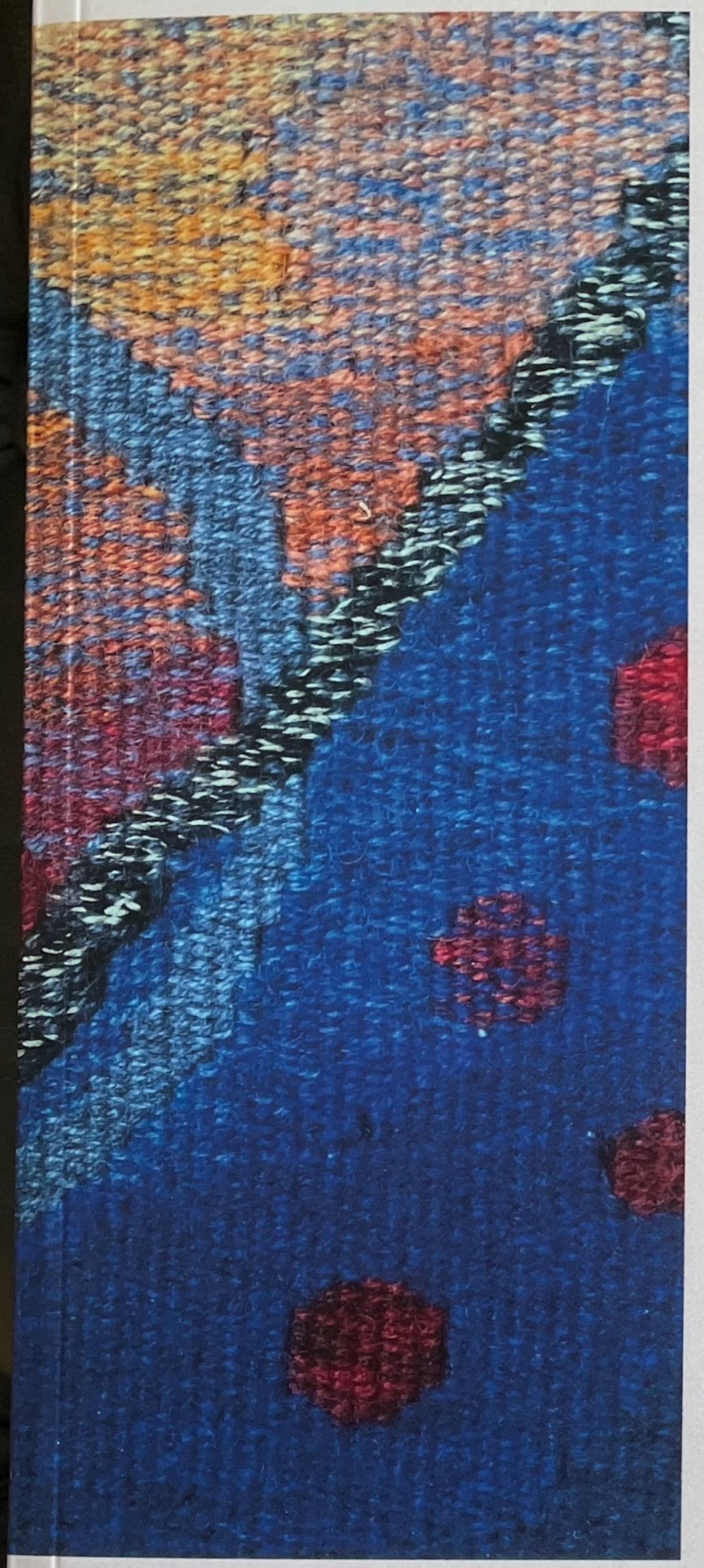

Picking up the Thread: The Past, Present and Future of Tapestry

About The British Tapestry Group

In 2005 five tapestry weavers, Ros Bryant, Janet Clark, Beryl Hammill, Shirley Ross and Nicola Wheeler, met to discuss how to promote tapestry weaving, help weavers liaise more closely and support fellow British tapestry weavers. They set up the British Tapestry Group (BTG) and organised two exhibitions over the next few years. 'Tapestry Today' was held at the Machpelah Works in Hebden Bridge in July 2006, followed by 'Tapestry 08' in Halifax, funded by the Arts Council.

Since then, the British Tapestry Group has grown from strength to strength, providing a network and forum for beginners and established practitioners, helping to raise awareness of and promote tapestry weaving as a contemporary art form in Britain and internationally.

The British Tapestry Group is a volunteer-run organisation, delivering and supporting a range of activities including the bi-annual printed magazine Tapestry Weaver, regional membership group meetings and exhibitions, member networking, national exhibitions, and information about tapestry weaving.

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August 2025

Front and back cover image: Sara Trist, Timescape (detail)

the BRITISH TAPESTRY group

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About The Exhibition

Welcome to the British Tapestry Group's 20th Anniversary exhibition. From five passionate tapestry weavers celebrating their love of tapestry across a kitchen table, we have, just twenty years later, grown into a worldwide organisation of around 400 members and tapestry weaving is no longer considered to be an endangered craft. Woven by hand, tapestry is a slow process of constructing fabric, weaving yarn horizontally over and under the vertical warps, an apparently simple process that can become fiendishly complex when blending colours or weaving shapes. Tapestry weaving uses optical mixing, where a bundle of yarn is made up of several different colours and one thread can make all the difference to the overall image - look closely at the tapestries in this exhibition to see the results of this amazing process.

If our 'Past' is the legacy from our founding members, then the 'Present' is our thriving community of tapestry weavers, all members of the British Tapestry Group and some of whose work is shown in this exhibition. Our call for submissions resulted in an amazing number of entries, far exceeding our expectations. We were equally delighted that we received entries from both well known artists and members who weave purely for enjoyment. We invited three experienced and internationally known tapestry weavers to act as jurors: Joan Baxter, Fiona Hutchison and Caron Penney. They have our thanks for rigorously evaluating each submission before agreeing which work would go through to the exhibition - not an easy task. At two of our venues, we are also fortunate to have a work by the inspirational Mary Farmer (1940-2021), many of whose works are now in public collections. Mary wove in wool, fascinated by the subtle surface texture and depth of colour she could achieve and the possibilities of abstraction in weave.

So what does the 'Future' look like?

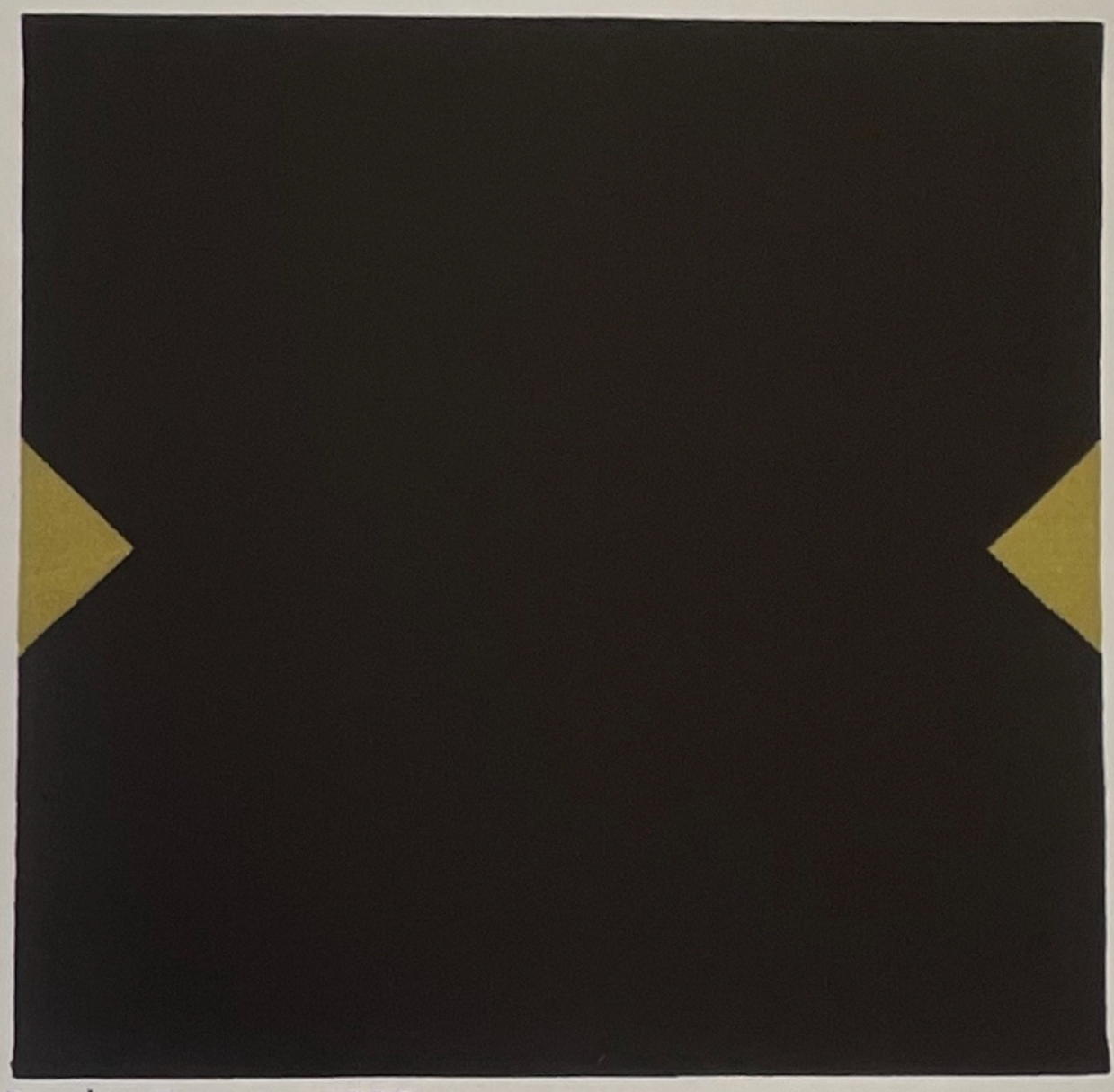
Tapestry weaving is changing. No longer a visible sign of wealth and privilege and using several hundred colours of fine yarn, tapestry has become accessible to everyone. Many weavers are using their work to highlight concerns for the future such as inequality, social injustice and climate change. Whilst many weavers still prefer a more traditional style of weaving - wool and silk, discontinuous weft and two dimensional - increasingly tapestry is also moving off the wall, incorporating recycled or new materials such as metal and plastic, or embracing new relationships with other textiles under the umbrella of mixed media.

The one thing that remains a constant theme throughout this exhibition is that each piece has been woven by hand and every thread in every tapestry has been placed with consideration and care.

Welcome to the world of tapestry weaving!

Paulette Furnival, *Chair*
British Tapestry Group

Mary Farmer
(1940-2021)



***Bender*, Tapestry 1985**
105cm x 104cm Cotton Warp, 100% Wool Weft
Photo: Simon Warner. Image Courtesy of the Estate of Mary Farmer

Mary Farmer (1940-2021) was an influential presence in the field of modern tapestry in the second half of the twentieth century.

Her mastery of the language of abstraction in weave led to presence in high profile exhibitions from the late 1960s - 1990s and numerous commissions for private and corporate collections including Channel 4 Television and British Oxygen Company. She balanced an active studio with a significant career in design education, joining the Textile Department at the Royal College of Art, London as a tapestry tutor and going on to establish and develop a newly independent Tapestry Course within the Fine Art Painting School until its closure in 1995.

Works are held in the following collections: Contemporary Art Society; Crafts Council, London; Craft Study Centre, Farnham; Government Art Collection; Hove Museum and Art Gallery; Oxfordshire County Museums; Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia; V & A Museum, London
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Farmer.

Her archive is now held at the Craft Study Centre, Farnham, gifted by the Estate in 2024.
https://www.csc.uca.ac.uk/programme/4/4/2024/mary-farmer-a-life-in-tapestry

Flat woven rugs and tapestries and floor-rugs are based on a minimalist aesthetic, aiming to achieve maximum power through the limitation of means. Intense colour animates geometric and spatial relationships. Surface is restrained in order not to interfere with the highly condensed and ambiguous imagery.
Mary Farmer 1990

Zac Whitewood-Moores and the Estate of Mary Farmer are grateful to the British Tapestry Group for the invitation to loan a work of hers for this Anniversary exhibition.

THE BIG 20TH

Picking up the Thread:

The Past, Present and Future of Tapestry

Gracefield Arts Centre

Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries
16th August - 4th October 2025

Dovecot Studios

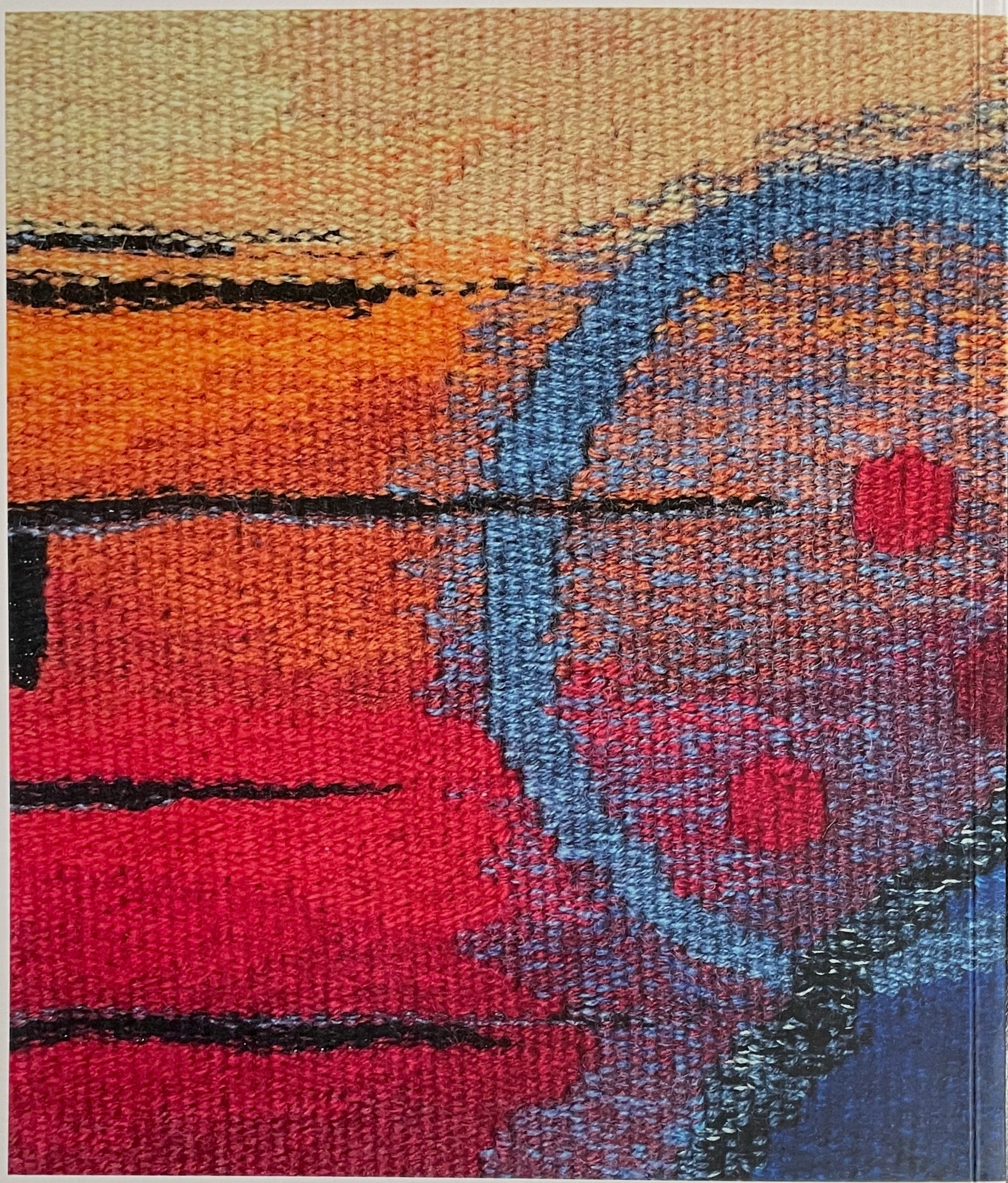
Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh
20th October 2025 - 14th February 2026

REAL IDEAS

The Market Hall, Devonport
2nd - 18th March 2026

MORLEY GALLERY

Morley Gallery, London
13th - 25th July 2026



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